

# SIERRA CASCADES DIALOG

PREPARED BY CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE POLICY, UPDATED 2/11/2013

## OVERVIEW

In February 2010, the Forest Service and University of California convened a conference on *Pre- and Post-Wildfire Forest Management for Restoration and Resiliency*. At the close of the conference, participants provided recommendations for additional discussion and work that could be categorized into four broad topic areas: strategic fuels treatments across landscapes with mixed ownerships, adaptive management, increasing public and agency education, and ecosystem services. As an outgrowth from this conference, the Forest Service and stakeholders organized the Sierra-Cascades Dialog.

*The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.*

This document summarizes the Sierra-Cascades Dialog structure and framework. The intent of the Dialog is to hold regular conversations among engaged stakeholders on a range of issues across the Sierra Nevada and the Cascades. The term “stakeholder” refers to any individual or organization that has a direct interest in public lands. This includes the Forest Service as the convener. The goal is to create shared understanding among participants with diverse opinions. The outcomes of the dialog inform future Forest Service decisions.

## GOALS

The dialog focuses on the future of the Sierra Nevada and Cascades, with attention on the national forests in these regions. Dialogs provide an opportunity for learning, shared meaning, aligned actions, mutual respect and understanding different perspectives.

The goals are to:

- Bring together public and private land managers to grapple with an “all lands” approach to planning and conservation, beginning with fire protection issues

- Lay the foundation for Forest Plan revisions
- Develop stakeholder collaborative capacity to address challenging complex issues on a broad scale
- Create shared responsibility and understanding
- Build relationships and trust among all stakeholders

## PARTICIPATION

All meetings will be open to the public. Anyone is welcome to participate.

The Steering Committee, with facilitator guidance, will conduct outreach to support participant diversity.

### Diversity Goals

- Age & Cultural Diversity
- Geographic Diversity
- Socio-economic Diversity

### Interest Group Representation

- County Governments
- Environmental Organizations
- Fire Safe Councils
- Industry
- Land Managers, including Forest Service staff and leadership
- Private Landowners
- Recreation Groups
- Rural and Urban Communities
- Scientists
- State Government
- Tribes
- Water Agency
- Youth

## PROPOSED DISCUSSION TOPICS

Dialog participants play an active role in defining the topics to be discussed. This is essential to establish the relevance of the topics at hand and to generate interest and participation. The following range of broad topics served as the preliminary framework for developing the dialog. This list reflects the February 2010 conference outcomes and other topics of interest.

- “All Lands” Approach (Forest Service and neighboring lands) | Strategic planning for ecological restoration across ownerships | Coordination of fire protection across ownerships
- Ecological Restoration
- Biodiversity and Wildlife Conservation
- Historic Contexts of Landscapes
- Changing Climates
- Ecosystem Services (biodiversity, wood, water, recreation, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, carbon sequestration, etc.)
  - Program Planning
  - Economic Assessments (Monetary Value)
  - Sustainable Funding
- Economic Sustainability and Community Vitality—The Role of Forests
- Monitoring, Research & Adaptive Management
  - Adaptive management for pre- and post-fire work
  - All party monitoring
- Water Resources, Water Quality and Watershed Management Planning
- Salvage Logging: Terms, Planning, Science and Goals
- Social Science Issues of Public Land Management
- Attitudes, Values & Beliefs
- Planning Rule Implementation: the Role of Tribes in Collaborative Planning

## DIALOGS

Dialogs occurred in 2011 and 2012 and more are planned for 2013. The Steering Committee selects the Dialog focus to be responsive to pressing topics while addressing a range of issues that need attention and dialog.

**DIALOG #1: LEADERSHIP INTENT FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION, NOVEMBER 4, 2010**

**DIALOG #2: VALUES, ATTITUDES & BELIEFS, FEBRUARY 24, 2011**

**DIALOG #3: IMPROVING SOCIAL & ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN RURAL FOREST COMMUNITIES, OCTOBER 12, 2011**

**DIALOG #4: PREPARING FOR FOREST PLANNING: SCIENCE SYNTHESIS, DECEMBER 15, 2011**

**DIALOG #5: COLLABORATIVE PLANNING IN FOREST PLAN REVISION, MARCH 1, 2012**

**DIALOG #6: ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT IN FOREST PLANNING: TOOLS & TECHNIQUES, MAY 10, 2012**

## DIALOG #7: RECREATION: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND IMPACTS, SEPTEMBER 27, 2012

## DIALOG #8: SCIENCE SYNTHESIS REPORT, JANUARY 24, 2013

## DIALOG #9: BIOREGIONAL ASSESSMENT FOR FOREST PLANNING, JANUARY 25, 2013

### LOCATION

The usual location for meetings is the McClellan Air Force Base, near Sacramento. In 2012 and 2013, the Dialogs are held at the Lions Gate Hotel.

### OUTCOMES

The intent of the Dialog is for stakeholders to engage in conversation on land management issues of regional importance for the Sierra Nevada and the Cascades. Agreements and understanding achieved through the Dialog Group inform Forest Service decisions. The Regional Leadership Team and other staff of the Forest Service review workshop outcomes. (The Regional Leadership Team includes the Regional Forester, Deputy Regional Forester, key regional leaders, and the Forest Supervisors.) Dialog participants may participate in briefings to the Regional Leadership Team to represent the diversity and breadth of discussions.

The first Dialog helped the Region to refine the *Leadership Intent for Ecological Restoration*.

The second Dialog on *Values, Attitudes and Beliefs* has informed the Region's biological assessment for forest planning and led to the science synthesis.

The third Dialog on *Improving Rural Economies* built on work underway in partnership with County elected officials, the Sierra Nevada Conservancy, the Biodiversity Council, and other initiatives around the state.

The fourth Dialog on *Science Synthesis* identified questions that stakeholders would like the science synthesis to answer.

The fifth Dialog vetted a *Collaborative Model* for each early adopter forests to use during Forest Plan revision. The current Collaborative Guide includes Dialog participants' suggestions, and the Forests are now creating Collaboration & Communication Plans, recommended in the guide, with stakeholders.

The sixth Dialog on *Recreation: Social and Economic Benefits* will inform future planning by deepening understanding about demographic trends and the implications for Forests.

Outcomes take the form of Summaries of Issues Discussed and Statements of Understanding. Statements might consist of a common set of definitions, agreements, proposed strategies, issue summaries, etc. The statements will be driven by the content

of the discussion. The Summaries of Issues Discussed form the basis of a report, that the facilitation team prepares in cooperation with the graphic recorder, to document key ideas. As of December 2012, the Dialog has not generated any Statements of Understanding. Rather, Dialog discussion is recorded in a report format and graphic recordings.

## KEY FEATURES OF DIALOG & DELIBERATION

- **Exploration:** learning about the issues and discovering innovative solutions
- **Conflict Transformation:** resolving conflicts and improving relations among groups
- **Collaborative Action:** empowering groups to solve complicated problems and take responsibility for the solution by generating/developing ideas for action plans and implementing them collaboratively

## FORMAT

The typical format for a group dialog might follow these steps:

1. Set the context for the day.
2. Brief presentations to the group set the context for the first issue topic.
3. Issue is then explored at individual table groups to flesh out participants' interests.
4. Breakouts on subtopics of the theme (participants go to topic of choice) and record key ideas to seek common ground.
5. Return to plenary to review new possibilities and common ground forming in each group.
6. Create opportunities for participants to review work done by each group and add-in their own comments.
7. Pursue subsequent topic using steps identified above.

## WORKING TOGETHER IN DIALOG

All participants agree to adhere to several basic working agreements

1. Use common conversational courtesy
2. Be honest, fair and as candid as possible
3. Balance advocacy with inquiry
4. Explore impasses
5. Intentionally suspend judgment
6. Honor time
7. Think innovatively and welcome new ideas
8. Invite humor and good will

## ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

### STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee is focused and representative of the interest groups active in the Sierra Nevada. The purpose of the group is to guide the dialog process, helping to frame discussion topics and the meeting format. The facilitator will work with the Steering Committee on meeting design. The facilitator will be responsible for finalizing the agenda and facilitating the meeting.

### MEMBERS

Deb Whittall, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (R5) Social Scientist—LEAD ORGANIZER

Jim Branham, Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Steve Brink, California Forestry Association

Kevin Elliot, Sequoia National Forest

George Gentry, Board of Forestry and Fire Protection

Robert Goodwin, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (R5) Tribal Programs

Amy Granat, California Off Road Vehicle Association

Stacy Heaton, Regional Council of Rural Counties

Trinidad H. Juarez, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region

Susie Kocher, UC Cooperative Extension

Caelan McGee, U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution

Stephanie Phillips, Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest

Ron Pugh, Region 5 Planning

Frank Stewart, California Fire Safe Council

Danna Stroud, Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Edmund Sullivan, Placer County Planning Department

Craig Thomas, Sierra Forest Legacy

Stan Van Velsor, Wilderness Society

Bill Wickman, Sustainable Forest Action Coalition

Steve Wilensky, Calaveras County Supervisor

Donald Yasuda, USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region (R5), Ecosystem Conservation

## FACILITATOR ROLE

The facilitator will remain impartial toward the content of the discussions. The facilitator will:

- Formulate the agenda and desired outcomes for sessions;
- Identify and synthesize points of agreement and disagreement
- Assist in building consensus among participants
- Work with participants to ensure a productive working environment
- Serve as a confidential communication channel for participants who wish to express views privately because they do not feel comfortable doing so in front of the large group
- Advocate for a fair, effective and credible process, but remain impartial with respect to the outcome of the deliberations